



# Commonwealth Scholars Initiative

Presented to the  
Virginia Board of Education  
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## Commonwealth Scholars Initiative

- A multi-state business/education partnership effort focused on increasing the number of high school students who take a rigorous secondary-level curriculum designed to strengthen the chances for success in both college and the workplace
- Originated under the name of State Scholars Initiative



# Commonwealth Scholars Initiative

## Rationale

- There is a strong link between courses completed in high school and postsecondary achievement.
- A solid high school education can increase wages, both for students who enroll in and complete postsecondary education and for students who enter the workforce directly from high school.
- A solid academic foundation in high school benefits every student, regardless of ethnicity and socioeconomic status.



# Commonwealth Scholars Initiative

- Business leaders and members of civic organizations work with local educators to:
  - create and implement the program in their communities.
  - visit classrooms and talk to students about why an academically challenging course of study is important and how it will help them— whether they go on to college or go straight to work.
  - motivate students, create incentives, provide support, & recognize Scholar success.



## Commonwealth Scholars Initiative

- A national program with a local focus:
  - Virginia is one of 8 states that was recently added to the national State Scholars Initiative, for a total of 22 states
  - Each state designs its own program to meet its particular needs
  - Each state has at least two school districts participating in its first two years



## Core Course of Study

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of mathematics (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II)
- 3 years of basic laboratory science (biology, chemistry, physics)
- 3.5 years of social studies (chosen from U.S. and world history, geography, economics, personal finance, and government)
- 2 years of the same language other than English



# Grant Partners

- Grant Recipient:  
Virginia Career Education Foundation
  - Required to be a business/education partnership
- Partners
  - Governor's Office
  - Secretary of Education's Office
  - Department of Education
  - Participating School Divisions



# Grant Partners

- Eleven participating school divisions:
  - Albemarle County
  - Alexandria City
  - Bristol City
  - Carroll County
  - Chesterfield County
  - Henry County
  - Lancaster County
  - Nottoway County
  - Richmond City
  - Roanoke County
  - Scott County



## Capacity of School Divisions

- Participating school divisions submitted a letter of commitment, signed by the division superintendent and principals of all participating schools, that clearly stated that the school district and participating schools:
  - have data systems in place in order to collect and track required data
  - are committed to providing any and all nonidentifiable student data as required



## Funding

- Total of \$300,000 to the VCEF spread over a two-year period
- Seed money to begin the program in the state
- Expectation that through other donations and funding sources, the program will be scaled up to include more schools after the grant period has ended.



## Use of Funds in Virginia

- Virginia proposes to use the funds to:
  - hire staff to coordinate the program
  - prepare materials at the state level to promote the program
  - provide recognition to participating students and
  - provide funding to school divisions to help them promote the program in their locality



## Role of Commonwealth Scholars Initiative in High School Reform

- Supports other Virginia efforts to provide options to students and to increase the rigor of high school programs
- Encourages students who might not be able to earn an Advanced Studies Diploma to reach beyond a Standard Diploma







## Other High School Initiatives

- NGA Grant to Redesign the American High School
- Early College Scholars
- Commonwealth College Course Collaborative
- Path to Industry Certification
- Career Prep Academy

## NGA Grant to Redesign the American High School

- Three Components
  - Policy Reform by Design
  - Colleagues for Success: Building High School Leadership Capacity
  - Commonwealth of Access: Transition, Readiness, and Access



# NGA Grant to Redesign the American High School

## ■ Objectives

- Decrease ninth-grade retention rate
- Decrease dropout rate
- Increase high school graduation rate
- Increase the amount of rigorous coursework selected by students
- Increase Advanced Placement test taking rates
- Increase preparedness for post-secondary education
- Increase college-going rates
- Increase college graduation rates



# NGA Grant to Redesign the American High School

## ■ Grant Partners

- Governor's Office
- Secretary of Education's Office
- State Council for Higher Education in Virginia
- Virginia Community College System
- Virginia Association of Secondary Principals
- 30 high schools selected for participation





# NGA Funding and Grant Period

## ■ Funding

- \$1 million each year for two years, with an equal in-kind state match

## ■ Grant Period

- August 1, 2005 – July 31, 2007



## Early College Scholars

- Allows eligible high school seniors to complete their high school diploma while earning at least 15 hours of *transferable* credits that can be used toward a college degree
  - results in a more productive senior year
  - reduces the expense of college tuition for families
- Credits earned through dual enrollment programs and by taking Advanced Placement courses at their home high schools or through the Virginia Virtual Advanced Placement School.



## Early College Scholars

2004-2005 (As reported by school divisions)	
Students who earned the Early College Scholars distinction	6,177
Students in grades 9 – 12 who signed an Early College Scholars Agreement	28,279



## Commonwealth College Course Collaborative

- A common set of subjects that allow Virginia students the chance to earn a semester's worth of college credit while in high school
- Comprised of 13 credit hours that are accepted at all of the participating institutions for *degree credit*.
- May earn as many as 20 additional *degree* credits at some schools



## Commonwealth College Course Collaborative

### ■ Core Courses

- Biology\*
- Psychology
- U.S. History

### ■ Additional Subjects

- Art History
- Economics
- English
- General Physics
- Mathematics
- Music Appreciation

\*For example, a score of 5 on the AP Biology exam will earn a student four (4) credit hours at *any* Virginia college — but at many institutions, a student can earn four credit hours with a score of 3 or 4. Students must earn a grade of C or higher in dual enrollment courses to receive transfer credit

## Path to Industry Certification



- Intended for high school juniors or seniors who have no postsecondary plans and do not possess an industry certification
- Participating students work toward a high school diploma while pursuing technical training for a selected industry certification or state license
- Tuition-paid technical preparation may continue after high school graduation through community college courses that lead to the student-selected industry certification.

## Path to Industry Certification Compact



- Participating students and their parents sign a Path to Industry Certification Compact agreeing that the student will complete all requirements for
  - A Standard or Advanced Studies diploma, and
  - All high school academic and/or career and technical education course requirements that lead to a selected industry certification

## Community College Requirements



- Students complete a career assessment to identify a certification option that aligns with the student's career objectives.
- The certifications available to students in the program vary by community college.
- Students may continue their technical preparation after high school graduation by taking community college courses through May of the year following high school graduation.

## Student Industry Certifications

Student Industry Certifications, Licenses, and Assessments	2003-2004 (Baseline)	2004-2005	2005-2006
Students who completed an industry certification in high school	3,508	5,241	Not Available
Path to Industry Certification student compacts submitted to the DOE	Not Applicable	224	527
Path to Industry Certification Compact students who completed an industry certification in community college	Not Applicable	20	Not Available
Teacher Certifications and Licenses			
Teachers who earned an industry certification or license as a result of a Path to Industry Certification Teacher Training Academy	300	1,037	200
School, Division, and Community College Participation in Path to Industry Certification			
Schools	48	166	327
School Divisions	17	56	132
Community Colleges	4	11	23

## Career Prep Academy

- Provides opportunities for non-graduates to complete:
  - An industry certification or state licensure preparation courses and
  - Remaining standard and/or verified credit graduation requirements during the summer and/or fall after their incomplete senior year



## Career Prep Academy Pilot Sites 2004-2005 and 2005-2006

- Eastern Shore Community College
  - Accomack and Northampton Counties
- Patrick Henry Community College
  - Henry County and City of Martinsville
- Rappahannock Community College
  - Gloucester County



## Career Prep Academy Design

- An Education Plan is developed for each student enrolled in the academy that includes:
  - Identification of standard credits needed for graduation
  - Identification of verified credits needed for graduation
  - Date of completion for the Career Planning Assessments
  - Industry certification or state licensure selected based on the planning assessments
  - Identification of students' individual needs and measures to meet each need



Agreement signed by the student, parent(s), and CPA regional coordinator

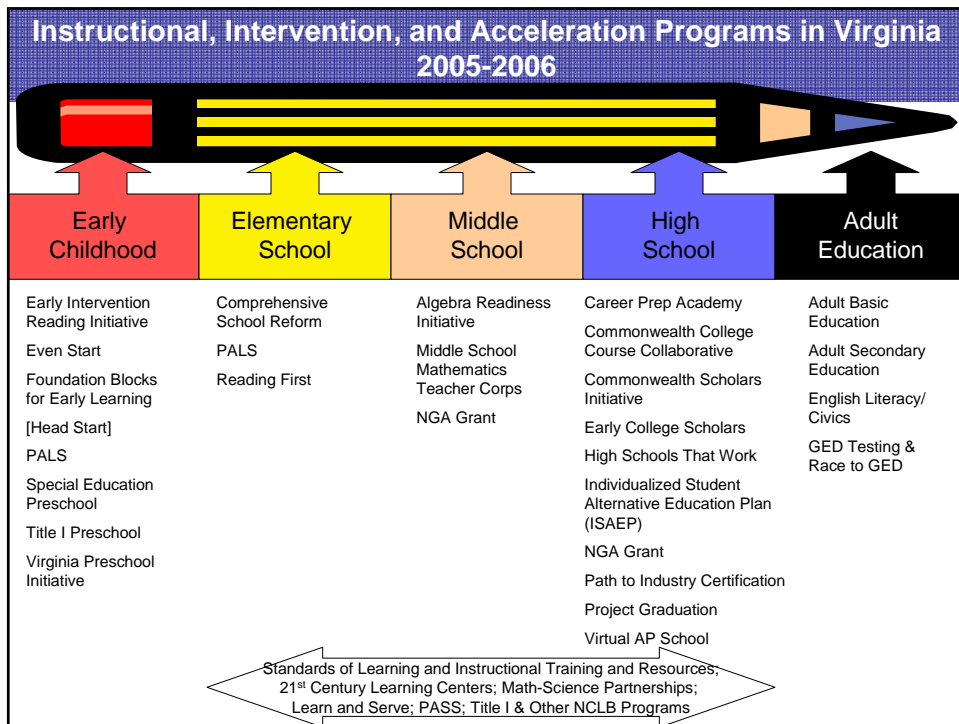


## Career Prep Academy Success Rate – 2004-2005

Total Students Enrolled	61
Percentage Earning a Diploma and an Industry Certification	43%
Percentage Earning a Diploma or GED Only	18%
Percentage Returning to High School	6%
Percentage Not Completing the Program	33%

## For Additional Information

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- Ms. Elizabeth Russell, Director, Office of Career and Technical Education, (804) 225-2051 or [Elizabeth.Russell@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Russell@doe.virginia.gov)



**Instructional, Intervention, and Acceleration Programs in Virginia  
2005-2006**

### Some Pending Opportunities

- Work with the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center
  - Adolescent Literacy: Grades 4 – 8
  - Middle-to-High School Transition
- Grant Application to USED
  - AP Initiative for Low-Income Students
  - Focus on Teacher Training and Vertical Teaming